

Chapter 791 Drinks

“... the heat was so bad, I could barely even think. I’m pretty sure my magic protected me, both my ash and my space stuff. My healing just takes care of things anyway, always been like that,” Ilea recalled. *Thanks Reconstruction, you’re the real mvp.*

“The machine said it would take nearly a century to cool off?” Walter asked, sipping from his ale before he shook his head.

“What powered that thing?” Lucia asked. “I mean enchantments and machines can be powerful but what you describe is... incredible.”

Ilea smiled. “I know what it is, but I can’t share that information. It might literally cause a war or something.”

Kyrian smiled.

“Well now you have to share it,” Harthome said.

Ilea opened her mouth when Kyrian touched her arm. “Ilea,” he said, raising his brows. “She’s not joking you know. This is not information that should get out there at all.”

“I mean they’re mostly just dwelling down here anyway,” Ilea said as she leaned back in her ashen chair, drinking from the wonderful ale. “*I’ll buy whatever you have,*” she sent to the man in question.

“*We can talk about that before you leave,*” Walter answered. “*The prices have gone up.*”

Ilea smiled. “*My accountant will be here later. I’m sure we can figure something out, Mr. Business.*”

“*Corridors to maintain, holes to dig,*” he said.

“What’s with the mushrooms anyway?” Ilea asked. “And where’s Indra?”

“They add to the atmosphere,” Celene said.

“I told you they’re strange,” Lucia said, looking away.

“Not this again,” Walter murmured, glancing at Ilea with ire in his eyes.

“Want to fight, dark magic man,” Ilea asked, wisps of white flame flaring to life in front of her eyes.

“I liked you more below level one hundred,” he said.

Ilea smiled and leaned forward, resting her chin on her hands. “Oh? And here I thought you liked strong women.”

He broke eye contact and glanced to the side, muttering unintelligible words.

“Thought so,” Ilea said, seeing Lucia wink her way.

“We’ll talk about the mushrooms when we don’t have guests here,” Celene said and crossed her arms. “What do you think, Weavy?”

“I thought we would drop the conversation now?” Lucia said, glaring daggers at the woman.

“Yeah, yeah, whatever,” Celene said.

“You have a new necklace!” Ellie said with a smile.

Ilea raised her brows. “Yeah. I found that recently. It’s called the Azarinth Star, a mythical item.”

“Mythical?” Lucia asked.

Somewhere, Harthome screamed.

“Yes, it can summon barriers,” Ilea said and summoned a few of the shimmering golden shields.

“Pretty,” Ellie murmured.

“How much?” Celene asked.

“Did you just ask Lilith to sell her mythical item?” Walter asked.

Celene shrugged. “Worth a shot.”

“Her wealth and power is beyond your understanding,” Wavy sent, for everyone to hear.

“That’s exactly what I meant. Insults like that,” Celene whispered in a slightly raspy tone, touching the demon’s arm.

“Gross,” Lucas said.

Ilea started laughing. “Right. So yeah, then I put Aki into the machine and here we are. You’ll probably see the impact soon, just imagine it. Taleen machines all over the human plains. Delivering goods, messages... well inside the cities, we have teleportation gates now too.”

“Monster attacks below level two hundred would become entirely irrelevant,” Walter murmured.

“But... as would most adventurers and Shadows.”

“No,” Kyrian said.

“What do you mean? Aren’t the machines at least at level one fifty, most are at two hundred or even higher, you said so yourself,” Walter said.

“I’m a Shadow,” Kyrian said and pointed at Ilea. “She’s a Shadow.”

“That’s why I said most,” Walter said.

“They’ll just have to push themselves harder, find more dangerous monsters to fight. Now that the Sentinels are around to heal, with independent healers hopefully less stigmatized or even hunted, they should have an easier time,” Ilea said. “Plus all that traveling is done for. People can now teleport to a frontier or to a dungeon town near instantly.”

“I suppose, yes,” Walter said. “On the healer thing... why would they be less stigmatized now? Or hunted?”

“Because it was the Corinth Order who did that. Their management... has changed. And if I hear about a healer being killed or intimidated by their members, I’ll be the one doing the hunting,” she said with a smile.

“You’ve changed,” Lucia said as she looked at her.

“A little, I suppose,” Ilea said. “Power corrupts, to an extent. I’m not scared of the healing orders.”

“No, they’re scared of you now,” Lucia said with a smile. “How barbaric.”

“We made deals. I don’t consider it barbaric to push orders to stop hunting independent healers. Fuck that,” Ilea said. “Oh and I’m planning to get an academy running in Ravenhall at some point. To share knowledge and training on Classes and various schools of magic. Just need to find enough faculty.”

Walter chuckled. “You’re really pushing it. The nobles won’t be happy about that.”

“Then they’re free to challenge me,” Ilea said with a wide grin.

“I thought you didn’t want to be the Empress or whatever,” Kyrian said, tapping her temple with a loud impact.

“I don’t. This is just providing education and making the species in the Accords stronger. Hoarding magical knowledge is stupid,” Ilea said. “Some of this world is super progressive, other bits are just... medieval.”

“Medieval?” Kyrian asked.

“Yeah, a historic thing where I’m from. My point is, why should magical knowledge not be shared, studied, and understood?” she said.

“No, I agree with you,” Kyrian said.

“Powerful people want to remain in power,” Walter said. “And there is an argument to be made that most people shouldn’t have access to that knowledge and power.”

“Why not?” Ilea asked.

He shrugged. “I’ve traveled far and wide in my time. And I’ve met a lot of people that... should not wield power.”

“Fair. I’ve met a bunch that did, and shouldn’t have,” Ilea said. “Magic is just a tool. People that would abuse that tool are why we have laws.”

“Seems like you push a lot of people around though,” Lucia said, fidgeting with her mug a little. She didn’t meet Ilea’s eyes. “Does someone like you have to adhere to those laws too?”

“I try to,” Ilea said. “I get what you mean though. And it’s not that simple. I don’t believe being perfectly lawful is the way to go. I don’t want to invade someone’s home, but if I see they’re housing slaves in their basement, you bet your ass I’ll kick in those doors. I must’ve broken several laws when we invaded Baralia, sneaked into their cities. But we stopped rituals that would’ve killed thousands. I don’t regret that, and would do it all again in a heartbeat.” She paused. “I trust my friends to tell me when I lose it or go too far.”

“There are always shifts in power,” Kyrian said. “I believe the Accords are a good thing for most. Every awakened species is allowed to live in their cities, every belief is allowed, every school of magic can be studied, as long as such study doesn’t break any laws. Homes and food is provided to all, regardless of wealth. Opportunities exist even for those not of noble blood.”

“Didn’t know you cared so much about the last bit,” Ilea said.

“I... I realized a lot of things since...” he said and turned a little red.

Ilea smirked. “Aliana, hmm?”

“Yes. I simply accepted some things from my past. And she’s told me about hers,” he said, drinking from his mug of water. “Fuck that. We have the power to change things, why wouldn’t we?”

“*We would be ready to join,*” came Claire’s voice.

“Speaking of nobles,” Ilea said. “Okay if I open a gate here?”

“We have a strict no gate rule,” Walter said in a dry tone.

“Really?” Ilea asked.

“No,” he said and motioned for her to go for it.

Ilea summoned the gate right behind her and moved her arm through, waving towards the gate.

The first thing that flew through was a little Fae.

Greetings

Mortals

“No violence?” Ilea asked the Baron.

It flew around before landing on the table, carefully inspecting Ilea’s mug.

Violence. It nodded.

Trian and Claire stepped through, the latter hitting her shin against a bench.

“Wha-” she exclaimed, shifting to the side as she looked around the somewhat cramped hall.

“Greetings,” Walter said and raised his mug.

Trian smiled. “Hello everyone. Ilea did mention you lot before. Hello Weavy,” he said and waved to the demon.

“*Vampyr,*” the demon spoke and nodded, the gesture a little strange still, not executed quite like a human would.

The gate closed.

“Is that a fae?” Ellie asked as she leaned forward.

Lucas and Nairr did the same, the trio looking at Violence.

The Baron turned around and spread his wings and arms, flying up.

Mortals

Listen

To

Ilea grabbed the fae and put it onto her shoulder. “Shut it, you megalomaniac.”

The Fae giggled.

“You say that like you’re not the reason the Accords exist,” Trian said as he found a chair and sat down. “I’m Trian, Headmaster of the Sentinel Corps, member of the Accords, and a friend of Lilith.”

“They know my real name,” Ilea said as she battled the small space mage with her own magic.

“*Like an annoying fucking fly.*”

Slow

Dense

“*You dare,*” Ilea answered.

Kyrian touched her shoulder. “You’re gonna kill someone.”

She realized her fires were active. “Oh. Sorry.”

Violence!

The Fae landed on her head and nestled into her hair.

“And I’m Claire,” the woman said and sat down.

“You’re friends of Ilea, make yourself at home. Food and drink is on the house,” Walter said.

“We appreciate it,” Claire said.

The Vultures introduced themselves in turn.

“You seem tired,” Celene said, looking at Claire.

The woman nodded, drinking from her mug. “Oh this is good,” she said. “Do you have anything stronger?”

Walter smiled. “Yes, feel free to browse,” he said and motioned to the shelves with dozens of bottles.

“I’ll pay, don’t worry,” Claire said as she stood up.

“I assume she’s told you some things already?” Trian asked, looking at Celene.

“The machines, the Taleen, Accords, yes. She’s mentioned some things,” the woman answered.

“Yeah. Ilea left us to deal with the details of the Taleen integration into the Accords,” he said and rubbed his temples. “They’re far more obsessed with contracts than anyone I’ve dealt with before.”

“Still only took a few hours,” Kyrian said.

“Thanks to the Meadow, yes. And all the other insane minds. Plus we have plenty of contracts set up already, it was just a matter of adjusting and expanding things. The Taleen were prepared with their demands as well. The negotiations were short,” Trian said. “But intense. I do enjoy managing the Sentinels way more.”

“Not like this happens every day,” Ilea said, stuffing her face with bread, cheese, and cold cuts.

“First, you left after the initial meeting. Second, no it wouldn’t, if you wouldn’t constantly find new people to join,” Trian said.

Ilea shrugged. “Sorry, I go out and meet beings. While you sit in your office.”

“You were the one who asked me! The Sentinels were your idea,” he said, squinting at her.

Ilea offered him a cheese sandwich.

He took it.

“I’m just saying,” he said between bites. “You’re not exactly around a lot. I have to deal with everything.”

“And I appreciate that,” Ilea said.

“Do you?” Trian asked. “Last week I had to console a twenty four year old adventurer because his resistances weren’t growing as fast as those of his peers. *Headmaster, it just hurts so much. Is this not for me?* He asked me. I’m still thinking about that.”

“What happened with him?” Lucia asked.

“He joined the Shadowguard after we talked and I advised him. Not everyone is made for the gruesome training of the Sentinels, and that’s okay,” Trian said before he downed his ale.

Claire sat down with a sigh and a drink, herbs sticking out of her glass, a citrusy smell coming from the mixture. She put down a bottle too.

“You know your spirits,” Walter said with a smile.

“I’m not the head fucking administrator of Ravenhall to drink crap,” she said and took a long swig.

“Prominent guests,” Lucia said. “Trian, it seems like you’re doing a wonderful job with the Sentinels.”

“I do try,” he said and raised his mug to her. “See, that’s what I mean with appreciation,” he said, glancing at Ilea.

She offered him another sandwich.

“You can’t solve everything with food and punching,” he said.

“I disagree,” Ilea said.

Violence, the Fae said and nodded.

“Incredible wealth helps too,” she said and ate the sandwich herself.

“And apparently people that do the more complicated work for you,” Walter said.

“Yes, like dealing with Cerithil Hunters,” she said and winked.

“Exactly. Ben has been quiet,” he said. “I do hope he’s fine. They live such a dangerous lifestyle.”

“He’s doing okay,” Ilea said. “They’re moving to the Descent now.”

“The multilayered dungeon below Hallowfort?” Naiir asked.

“She’s told you quite a lot, hmm?” Trian asked.

“Oh yes,” Walter said. “I mean you know her.” He gave the man a meaningful look.

Trian looked back before they both nodded ever so slightly, each taking a drink from their mugs.

“With their main objective done, they don’t really have anything to drive them I guess. But they’re still considered cursed and are hunted by the elves of the domain, most of them at least. Oh, did I tell you about Nelras Ithom?” Ilea said.

“I don’t believe you did,” Celene said. “It sounds like an exotic name. Can anyone travel to the Descent to meet the... elves?”

“They’re not there yet. But I guess, sure,” Ilea said. “Maybe I can introduce you to some.”

“Please don’t,” Lucia said, rubbing her temple.

“You’re not my mother,” Celene said.

“It sometimes feels like that,” Lucia said.

“Not to me,” Celene said. “Who’s Nelras?”

“So, I found this orb, it contained the soul of an ancient elven Monarch... like a Monarch, not a monarch, I do think I mentioned that before. Super powerful in his prime, at least he claims as much. So we used a machine from the Soul Forge of Kahn Joggoth to move the soul into a war machine made by the Meadow, a few enchanters, and Owl,” she said.

Kyrian just looked at her and smiled, everyone else listening.

“Owl, the Greater Lich?” Harthome asked, the smith back at the table.

“The one,” Ilea said.

He nodded in understanding.

“So there’s a former elven Monarch, male leader of an elven Domain, within a war machine, capable of talking and walking around... somewhere in the north?” Walter asked.

“Yeah, I guess. I think he’s still teaching the enchanters and the Meadow the runic system of the Ascended,” she said, looking at the ceiling as she thought. “Maybe we should talk to him about the Cerithil Hunters.”

“We did that while you were busy,” Claire said.

“Anything useful?” Ilea asked.

“He wanted to fight the Val Akuun, cursing his powerless new form before he got back to work,” Claire said. “He did ask to meet you again.”

“Why would he want to meet me?” Ilea asked.

“Because you will probably consider the mad demands of an ancient elven Monarch, whatever they may be,” Trian said. “Unlike sane people.”

“Hey, if the ideas are fun,” Ilea said.

“The Meadow is around, don’t worry about it,” Claire said, looking at Trian.

“You say that like I’m unreasonable,” Ilea said, squinting her eyes.

“Said the woman fighting eldritch horrors in Kohr, for fun,” Kyrian said.

Ilea looked at him for a few seconds before she continued eating in silence.

Not

mad.

Ilea

violent, the Fae sent, patting her head lightly.

“Is that supposed to be a compliment?” she asked.

The

Highest

Praise

"I can't tell if you're being sarcastic," Ilea sent.

Who

knows

"Speaking of new people to add to the Accords. What about your Fae cluster? Think you would be interested?" she asked.

Fae

Exist

Beyond

"That's pretty arrogant," Ilea said.

Yes, Violence replied.

"Okay," Ilea sent.

The creature giggled.

"At least that means I don't have to manage trading with the Hunters anymore," Walter said.

"Though I would like to meet Ben again," he murmured. *"An interesting being to talk to."*

"Their magic is really impressive too. Some of them are above level seven hundred, granted they did start at around level two hundred," Ilea said.

"And the other factions involved were fine with all that?" Lucia asked. *"I mean we're still technically in hiding because of the magic we use, and the people that are here."* She looked at Granpa Bones.

He seemed to be sleeping.

"The risks are present, but the votes were cast," Trian said. *"The Hunters didn't join the Accords, they will merely relocate to the Descent. So that any interested parties can familiarize themselves with the elves, learn from them, and maybe build ties."*

"Don't know how easy that'll be," Ilea said. *"I just didn't want them to run off and fight the Domains immediately. Or all of them to fuck off and do their own thing."*

"Would they attack the Domains? They did choose exile to protect their own kind," Walter said.

"I don't think they decided on anything. I know a few that definitely want to change the status quo, some others have already left now that the Guardians are dealt with. Only time will tell, but at least with them in the Descent, we should know what they plan to do," Ilea said.

"If they share anything with us," Kyrian said.

"The Meadow is watching," Trian said.

"The Meadow isn't all seeing," Kyrian said.

Ilea smiled, looking towards the mark she had on the being. *"Is it not?"* She waited but no snarky comment was sent her way. *Guess it really isn't.*

"Limited Meadow," she murmured.